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ABSTRACT

A study explored issues regarding job choice and the types of career information available in relation to a sample of Year 9 high school students in Sydney, Australia. Another objective was to determine the impact of gender, level of academic achievement, and degree of social disadvantage upon the choices made and the career information obtained by these students. Twenty-four students from each of three Mount Druitt high schools and 24 from each of two contrast schools were involved in semistructured interviews to obtain data. (These students were a subsample of approximately 650 Year 9 students who had participated in the Mount Druitt Longitudinal Study.) Results indicated that nearly all the students had made some sort of decision about a career direction. More students tended to move toward jobs on the basis of circumstance than by a matching-selection process. Students indicated they had selected a job because they knew someone who did the job, someone else had suggested it, or a relative or close friend was occupied in the job. Only 40 percent chose the job because it was appropriate to their skills or interest, and a large number of these had assumed their interests had automatically implied a career. Social disadvantage had relatively little impact on the career development of students. In contrast, gender and achievement level did have an impact. Just under 40 percent showed a reasonable amount of career information. The greatest source of information was parents; teachers also provided some information. (The interview schedule is appended.) (YLB)

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MT. DRUITT LONGITUDINAL STUDY

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From School to Work: Choosing and Planning a Career

Jenny Barltrop

March, 1988

From School to Work: Choosing and Planning a Career

Attitudes of Yr 9 Sydney High School Students towards Work, Unemployment and the Dole.

A Report of the Mount Druitt Longitudinal Study

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BACKGROUND TO THE MOUNT DRUITT LONGITUDINAL STUDY

Macquarie University School of Education has been involved in the Mt. Druitt area west of Sydney since 1979. At that time, Mt. Druitt was identified by all the social and welfare agencies as one of the most socially disadvantaged areas in N.S.W. In the same year, funds were made available from the Bernard van Leer Foundation to commence systematic educational intervention at the preschool level in five of the neighbourhoods of Mt. Druitt. The intervention programs were designed to achieve, amongst other aims, a bridging of the educational achievement gap supposed to occur between children from disadvantaged backgrounds and those not considered disadvantaged. As the children moved from the preschools into Kindergarten, the intervention programs were extended into this first year of formal schooling, with a later extension in 1979 into the first grade.

Since that time, the Study has been involved in ongoing assessment of educational achievement, attitudes and classroom behaviour of these children through tests, questionnaires and observation. Teacher and parent interviews have also been conducted. In 1985, the N.S.W. Department of Education took over the financial responsibility for the continuation of the project.

As one of the major objectives of the original intervention programs was to reduce or eliminate the hypothesised achievement gap, it was necessary to introduce groups of children into the study who, in comparison to the Mt. Druitt children, were relatively free of disadvantage, so that the Mt. Druitt children's progress could be compared to that of others.

In 1987, a total of 645 students were involved in the study as follows:

Mt. Druitt School 1	-	211 students
Mt. Druitt School 2	-	187 students
Mt. Druitt School 3	-	169 students
Contrast School 1 - Middle S.E.S. Near Sydney	-	46 students
Contrast School 2 - Middle S.E.S. Distant from Sydney	-	32 students

INTRODUCTION

In the past few years, there has been a growing interest in the process of transition from school to work. A number of recent government funded projects have either specifically addressed the transition process, or have been concerned with transition as one of the major thrusts. Some examples have been the School to Work Transition Program, and more recently, the Participation and Equity Program. Several inquiries into the issue have been undertaken and Commonwealth Schools Commission documents such as "Schooling for 15 and 16 year olds" (1980) and "Participation and Equity in Australian Schools" (1984) have been provocative and influential. Schools have responded by developing work experience programs, and transition education courses to cater for the growing concern and apparent need in this area, as well as seeking to improve students' access to career education.

Historically, the issue of transition from school to work has taken a high profile at times of increasing youth unemployment (Watkins, 1984). The inability of a large percentage of school leavers to find work would appear to indicate that the process of transition is not working well, and the blame for such a failure has often been laid on schools and school-leavers themselves.

Media reports have fanned employers' allegations that school leavers lack basic skills and have a poorly developed work ethic. A recent article in the Daily Mirror on the 9th November, 1987 reported that: "Many school leavers have the wrong attitude to work and some cannot even fill in job application forms, employers say."

However, while it is clear that education can improve the job prospects of an individual, lack of education cannot be blamed for high unemployment rates. Windschuttle (1979) believes that the education system

has joined the list of scapegoats held responsible for high youth unemployment, with complaints that the school curriculum is insufficiently vocationally oriented. However, he argues, this is not the cause of unemployment, only a result. In times of high unemployment, employers' perceptions and expectations change. They can afford to be more choosy, and those young people with lower educational qualifications lose out.

Schools have been quick to enter the debate, complaining that the "back to basics" campaign is an over-simplification of a more fundamental educational need. The Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts (1981) reports that educators claim that they are being forced to adopt roles that were traditionally filled by the family. Consumer education, sex and drug education, career education, media and communications are all subject schools are now expected to deal with. Further, technology, the loss of routine jobs and the rapidly changing world of work demand that schools produce students who are innovative, imaginative and adaptable.

As well as being a concern to employers, policymakers and educators, the issue of career education and vocational planning is an immensely important issue to adolescents themselves. "The first job is crucial to the young person. It is the capitalist equivalent of initiation rites in primitive society" (Windschuttle, 1979, p55). Failing to obtain a job is viewed as failing as a person by many adolescents. With the popularity of the view that to be unemployed is to be a "dole-bludger", it is no wonder that planning a career is of the utmost importance to young people.

Connell, Stroobant, Sinclair, Connell and Rogers (1975) found that teenagers view a job as "a glamorous, exciting prospect, a future that is certainly golden, if a little hazy around the edges" (p231). "Most students regard it (getting a job) as a daunting move into the unknown and

view it with a mixture of trepidation and pleasurable anticipation" (Blakers, 1978, p79).

Such a concern with work by teenagers has been documented by several researchers. Poole (1985) found that when senior high school students were asked what they were most concerned about, "jobs" was by far the most common response. "Choosing a future career" was ranked as the top item in a problem inventory, administered to Sydney teenagers by Connell et al (1975). Even students as young as Year 7 were already highly concerned with career decisions.

Several theories about how people enter careers have been developed in the past 30 years or so. The most influential of these theorists have been Super (1957), Roe (1964), Holland (1967) and Ginzberg (1972). For a full explanation of these particular theories, see the references given at the conclusion of this report. Alternatively, for a more complete overview of current career development theories, the reader is referred to Osipow (1983).

It is interesting that nearly all theories about career development have focussed almost exclusively on the choice process. However, there have been a small number of theorists in recent years who believe that focussing only on choice as the key element in the career development process is too simplistic (see Pryor, 1977; Fitzgerald, 1978). There is some evidence to suggest that individuals make rational choices about their careers, but, as argued by Poole (1983), the process is complex and can even be random or accidental. According to Blakers (1978), "the making of choices, even negative ones, is for most students a fairly haphazard affair. The evidence shows that most students themselves make the final decision on what they will do ... but their families are a strong influence on what they decide and a source of information and discussion. Students

are also influenced by family friends, their peers, the newspaper advertisements and chance" (p80).

Connell et al (1975) found that 19% of teenagers had either drifted into their jobs, had been forced into it, or had had the job arranged by somebody else, while another 8% had only taken the job as a fill-in while waiting for something else. Indeed, in times of unemployment and restricted job options, it would seem likely that circumstance and opportunity might play an increased role in the eventual occupations that individuals find themselves in.

If it is true, then, that occupational choice is far less important in forecasting occupational entry than the major theorists would have us believe, it leads one to question what sort of role schools should be playing in vocational planning. Should the goal of career education be to help students decide on a career, or would resources be more effectively spent in providing students with more general skills to enable them to cope with the transition to work?

The role of the school in vocational planning and choice has been the subject of several studies. The results of nearly all these studies, however, indicate that the role of the school in this process is relatively minor.

Poole (1985), for example, found that the relevance of school personnel in the decision-making about school-leaving and careers was negligible. Ramsay and Lynch (1985) conclude that "in the decision making and planning required of students in relation to future jobs and careers, and in their attempts to solve problems associated with such demands at school, the teacher appears to occupy a limited significance." In contrast, "the preferred negotiators and advisors in these matters are parents and family, or perhaps friends, but not teachers" (p58).

In spite of the limited role schools seem to play, many students would prefer the schools to provide more help in career planning, and feel that the present level of career education is inadequate. Gray, Davis and Poole (1984), in a summary of the literature, state that even though leavers obtain most information from parents and family, many would like more career advice, and feel it should include a larger component of practical help such as specific job information and interview procedures. Poole (1985) found that "most adolescents ... wanted subjects taught in schools that related to their future jobs, more information about job entry qualifications, more career counselling and more assistance in developing strategies for coping in the early weeks of their first job" (p15).

This study, then, is an attempt to explore some of these issues in relation to a sample of Year 9 Sydney high school students.

1. With regard to job choice:-

   How many Year 9 students have made career choices?

   How are these choices made?

   What factors are influencing these choices?

2. With regard to career information:-

   How much information do students have about careers?

   What type of information is it?

   What are the sources of this information?

   How relevant to work is school perceived to be?

These questions will be addressed against three background variables: gender, achievement level and social disadvantage. Specifically, what impact does gender, level of academic achievement and degree of social disadvantage have upon the choices made and the career information obtained by these students?

METHOD

A semi-structured interview was chosen as the method most appropriate to address the issues of concern.

Subjects

The subjects involved in the interviews were a sub-sample of the 645 Year 9 students who had participated in the Mt. Druitt Longitudinal Study (MDLS) in previous years, as well as a small number of Year 9 students not previously involved in the study. These additional students were selected to complete the sub-sample where insufficient numbers of students were available from the MDLS sample who met the selection criteria.

Sample design

One hundred and twenty students were selected on the basis of three separate dimensions: school, gender and achievement level, in the following manner. Equal numbers of boys and girls were selected. Twenty four students were chosen from each of the three Mt. Druitt schools, as well as twenty four students from each of the two contrast schools. The characteristics of the sample school's catchment areas are shown in Table 1:

Table 1 : Characteristics of Sample Schools

School	Socio-Economic Status	Geographic Location
Mt. Druitt	Low	Outer city/semi rural
Contrast 1	High	Inner city
Contrast 2	High	Outer city/semi rural

The twenty four students from each school were selected on the basis of their performance, or level of achievement at school over the previous 18 months. A composite score was calculated for each student based on their performance on mathematics tests administered by the MDLS team in March 1986 and March 1987, and a standardized reading comprehension test administered in November 1986. The four highest scoring boys and girls from each school were then chosen and labelled 'high achievers' as well as the four lowest scoring boys and girls, 'low achievers', and the four boys and girls whose score fell closest to the mean, 'middle achievers'. Since English and Maths classes at each school are streamed, a comparison was made between each student's composite score, and his/her English and Maths class. If the composite score of a selected student appeared to be disparate with one or both of the classes he/she was in, the student was discarded from the sample, and a replacement was chosen.

It should be noted that students were selected on level of achievement relative to other Yr 9 student in their school, not relative to the entire sample.

Reserve students were also selected, in case any of the sample students were unable to be interviewed for any reason.

The sample design is illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2 : Sample Design

Achievement Level	HIGH		MIDDLE		LOW		TOTAL
Sex / School	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Mt. Druitt 1	4	*5	4	4	4	4	25
Mt. Druitt 2	4	4	4	4	4	4	24
Mt. Druitt 3	4	*5	4	4	4	4	25
Contrast 1	4	4	4	4	4	4	24
Contrast 2	4	4	4	4	*5	4	25
TOTAL	20	22	20	20	21	20	123
	42		40		41		

* An additional 3 students are also included in the analysis. These students belonged to the group of reserves and were initially interviewed to replace absent students in the sample, but became additional when the original students became available.

Instrument

Broad areas of interest were identified from the literature and by discussion with other researchers. A list of questions was then compiled to obtain information about these areas. A set of prompts for each question was developed for use with shy students.

A pilot run of the interviews was arranged with Year 9 students at a suburban high school similar in characteristics to the sample schools. Eight students were interviewed, with a mixture of males and females, and achievement levels. Two interviewers conducted the interviews and each made notes about which questions elicited the most information, whether

students had difficulty answering any questions and which probes were successful. The types of responses obtained by each interviewer were also compared to determine whether there had been any differences in interpretation of the various items.

The interview schedule was then modified to increase the number of questions and decrease the amount of information to be elicited by each question, thereby reducing the complexity of each item and making the eventual coding of the answers easier.

A re-trial of the modified interview was run at the same school with another eight students.

A copy of the final version of the interview schedule is included in the appendix.

Procedure

The interviews were conducted early in Term 3 (July-August), 1987, over a period of 5 weeks. Two interviewers, one male and one female, were involved and each interview lasted between 30 and 40 minutes. Subjects were allocated to an interviewer on the basis that each interviewer should work with approximately the same number of males and females, and of high, middle and low achievers from each school. Student's responses were recorded in writing by the interviewer at the time of the interview.

Analysis of Interview Data

A preliminary coding framework was prepared on the basis of a content analysis of responses obtained during the pilot interviews. After the completion of the main interviews, ten scripts were selected at random and answers were coded according to the framework. If any categories were found to be missing, but needed for the coding of these ten, they were

added, while any unnecessary categories were deleted. In one case, the categories devised for the preliminary framework were found to be inadequate to sort the ten scripts, and so a separate thirty scripts were selected and a content analysis of the answers to this item carried out to derive more appropriate categories.

A further five scripts were then drawn out at random, and were each coded according to the revised coding framework by three different coders (the two interviewers and another member of the research team), to identify any variation that may occur in coding due to the coder. Differences were discussed and resolved and the meaning of each category was clarified as a result.

Coding of the one hundred and twenty three scripts was then completed by the two interviewers, scripts being allocated according to who had carried out the interview. It was assumed that coding could be done more accurately by the person who had been the interviewer, as there would be less likelihood of error due to interpretation.

After all interviews had been coded, an approximate tally of the total number of responses in each coding category was made for each of the coder's set of data, in order to check for any differences in coding by the two coders. Any items which manifest significant discrepancies between the two totals were then recoded using a process of collaboration.

Frequency distributions for each item were then obtained for the whole sample, as well as a breakdown by sex, school and achievement level.

Notes about the discussion

1. For many of the questions, students were allowed more than one response. Therefore, percentages (or proportions) given may total more than 100%.

2. If there is no stated effect due to school, sex or achievement level for any particular item, it may be assumed that there was no significant difference between students due to those variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Almost three quarters of all students surveyed wanted to complete Year 12, while about one in five wanted to leave after Year 10. Only a few students expected to leave school before completing Year 10, while a small number had not yet decided when to leave.

Table 1 shows the percentage of students wishing to complete Year 12.

Table 1 : Percentage of students intending to complete Year 12

School \ Achievement Level	HIGH	MIDDLE	LOW	TOTAL
Mt Druitt Schools	92	71	17	61
Contrast 1	100	88	88	92
Contrast 2	78	100	33	72
TOTAL	93	80	34	72

As would be expected, more high- and middle-achieving students than low-achieving students wanted to complete Year 12. Also a larger proportion of students from Contrast School 1 intended to finish Year 12 than the Mt. Druitt students or the students from Contrast School 2, with Mt. Druitt students being slightly less motivated to proceed to Year 12.

There were no significant differences between the number of boys and the number of girls indicating their intention to complete Year 12.

Job Choice

Nearly all the students had some idea, whether vague or definite, about the sort of job they would prefer to do upon completing their formal education. Only 9% of students had no idea.

Table 2 summarizes the types of jobs students expressed an interest in.

Table 2 : Percentage of students indicating various job preferences

Background Variable / Job Type*	SCHOOL			SEX		ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL			TOTAL
	Mt Druitt	Contrast School 1	Contrast School 2	Male	Female	High	Middle	Low	
Professional	35	63	36	31	52	52	51	18	41
Para-Professional	14	13	16	20	8	21	5	15	14
Trades	31	8	24	36	14	8	19	52	25
Clerical/ Sales etc.	7	13	16	3	16	5	15	10	10
Labour	3	0	0	2	2	0	0	5	2
Undecided	10	3	8	8	8	14	10	0	8

* Jobs were classified according to the Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (Department of Employment and Industrial Relations, and the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1983).

Types of jobs occurring within each category are as follows:

Professional includes: Natural Science Professionals, Building Professionals and Engineers, Health Professionals, School Teachers, Social Professionals, Business Professionals, and Artists, etc.

Para-professional includes: Medical and Science Technical Officers, Engineering and Building Associates, Air and Sea Transport Technical Workers, Nurses, Police, Army, etc.

Tradespersons includes: Metal, Electrical, Building, Printing, Vehicle, Food and Horticultural Tradespersons, etc.

Clerical/Sales/personal Service includes: Stenographers, Typists, Clerks, Receptionists, Sales Assistants, Travel Stewards, Waitresses, etc.

Labourers includes: Factory Hands, and Agricultural Labourers.

From the table, it can be seen that more students from Contrast School 1 than from the other schools, and a much larger percentage of high- and middle-achieving students are interested in pursuing a professional career. Many more girls than boys also preferred professional jobs.

A correspondingly larger proportion of students from Mt. Druitt and Contrast School 2, males, and low-achieving students intended to enter trades.

Certainty of Job Choice

When asked how certain they were about this choice, more than half of the students were very sure (28%) or reasonably sure (32%). Just more than a quarter were somewhat undecided and had several doubts about their choice, while 12% were totally undecided.

It was found that low achieving students were more sure about their chosen job than middle- or high-achieving students, regardless of sex, and that students from the Mt. Druitt schools were more certain than their counterparts from the two contrast schools.

The following table summarizes these results.

Table 3 : Percentage of students very sure or reasonably sure of job choice

School \ Achievement Level	HIGH	MIDDLE	LOW	TOTAL
Mt. Druitt Schools	65	58	79	68
Contrast 1	63	25	63	50
Contrast 2	25	50	66	48
TOTAL	57	50	73	60

A comparison of Table 3 with Table 1 suggests a correlation between certainty of job choice and intended year of leaving school, such that students intending to complete Year 12 are less likely to be sure of their job choice. Presumably, those students who are nearing the time they are intending to leave will be more likely to have made decisions regarding their future work options than those students who still have several years before a choice must be made.

Those students who were at least reasonably sure about their choice, were requested to indicate what reasons they had for their certainty. Nearly two thirds of those asked, replied that they enjoyed the activity or subject relating to their chosen job. One in five thought that they knew enough about the job and what it involved in order to be certain of their choice, while 16% said that the job they had chosen was better than other jobs, or that it was the only job they liked when compared to other jobs they had considered. Just over one in ten students indicated that this job was what they had always wanted to do since they were young.

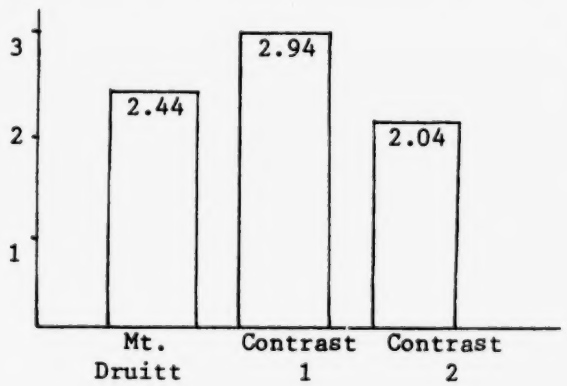
Forty percent of all students were not sure about what job they wanted to do, and of these, a half said that they would need to find out more about what was involved in the job and about the conditions before they could make a more definite decision. The academic requirements and qualifications needed were considered important to know more about by a further third of the students who were unsure of their choice. Many students, at this stage in their schooling, were reluctant to commit themselves to a judgement on how well they might perform at H.S.C. level or higher, and were unsure whether they personally would be able to meet the requirements of the job they were considering. Several students thought that trying out the job first might help them to know if they would enjoy it, thereby giving them greater confidence about their choice. A small

number of students felt that they needed to consider other available jobs before they could decide which job was most suitable for them.

Number of jobs considered

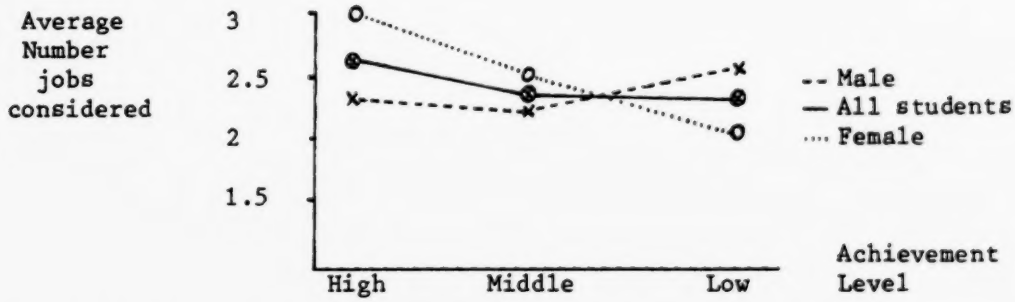
When asked how many jobs they had considered, the majority of students (59%) had thought about one or two jobs besides the one they had chosen. Seventeen percent had not considered any other jobs, while 20% had considered at least 3 others. Students from contrast school 1 had, on average, considered more jobs than students from Mt. Druitt, who in turn had considered more jobs than students from contrast school 2 (see diagram below).

Diagram 1 : Average number of jobs considered x school



The following graph gives a picture of the average number of jobs considered by students, broken down according to sex and achievement level.

Diagram 2



The graph demonstrates that there is an interaction between achievement level and gender in the number of jobs considered by students. Specifically, for girls, as achievement level increases, so does the number of jobs considered, while for boys, as achievement level increases, the number of jobs considered decreases. High achieving girls had considered more jobs than low achieving girls, while high achieving boys had considered less jobs than low achieving boys.

Factors influencing Job Choice

As an indication of the sorts of factors influencing the choice of a job, the students were asked to specify what it was that had prompted them to consider their chosen job.

Just over 40% of students replied that they had chosen this particular job because it was appropriate to their skills or interests. Girls were more likely than boys to select a job on this basis.

Thirty seven percent knew a person who presently did or had previously done the job, and this contact had been a major influence on them. This was more frequently the case with boys than with girls.

Another 15% said that someone who knew about the job had told them about it.

These last two groups of respondents were further asked to indicate who it was that had done the job or who knew about the job. In order of frequency of response, the sources were father (28%), another adult friend or relative (24%), brother/sister/cousin (22%), peer (9%), mother (7%), careers teacher (3%), and other teachers (2%).

One in five students claimed that they had seen or had some experience of the job or the workplace, and this had been the primary influencing factor in their choice of career.

A small number of students said that they had always wanted to do their chosen career since they were young and couldn't remember what had initially prompted them to consider it.

Extent and Type of Career Information

Various questions in the interview were designed to assess the amount and types of information students had obtained about jobs. Interviewers categorized students according to the amount, detail and diversity of information given in answer to the question "What things have you found out about your preferred job so far?"

A reasonable amount of information was shown by just under 40% of students.* A student was considered to show a reasonable amount if he/she talked about at least three aspects of the job, and the information given was accurate, relevant and contained at least some detail.

* It should be noted that no differences existed between schools in the amount and type of career information obtained by students. Therefore all following percentages refer to the entire sample.

Slightly less than half of the students demonstrated that they knew a small amount about the job they had chosen. These students talked about only one or two aspects of the job, and the information contained less detail.

Sixteen percent of students said that they had not yet found out anything about the job they were considering.

Of the students who possessed at least some knowledge about the job they had chosen, about two-thirds had found out about the qualifications required, including information concerning the required level of attainment and performance at school, and about pre-requisite courses of study. Boys were more likely to know about qualifications than girls, but high achieving girls were more likely to have this type of information than middle or low achieving girls.

Slightly more than a third of the students indicated that they had found out about what was involved in the job, and the duties to be performed.

Just under one in three made evaluative judgments about the job e.g. "My brother told me it's a good job", or "I know its hard work, but I think it's worth it."

Twenty nine percent of students said that they knew what personal skills and attributes were required for that kind of work e.g. "You have to be able to be patient with little kids." (Kindergarten teacher)

The conditions of employment, including salary and hours of work, etc. were claimed to be known by about a quarter of the students.

One in five indicated that they knew something about how to enter the field, or how to get a job. For example, some students knew a person or organization to contact, or about an entrance exam.

Just less than one fifth of the students said that they possessed general or technical information about the field of interest e.g. "I already know how to tune an engine", or "I've been reading lots of books on marine biology".

Sources of Information

This question was put to the students: "If you wanted to talk about jobs, your plans for the future, and what its like to be in the workforce, who would you choose to talk to?"

Responses are shown in the following table.

Table 4 : Preferred sources of information

Source	% Males	% Females	% All students
Mother	25	31	28
Father	44	21	32
Brother/sister/cousin	4	3	3
Friend	2	5	4
Teacher	2	3	3
Careers teacher/CES	13	21	17
Other adult	2	3	3
Someone who knows	8	12	10

The most common choice was fathers, though boys were more likely to talk to their fathers than girls. Mothers were the next most frequently chosen source of information, with girls more often indicating that they would talk to their mothers than boys. Careers teachers also ranked fairly high as someone to whom students would like to talk to, with some students indicating the CES as an option. More girls than boys would prefer to discuss issues with the careers teachers. Several students would seek out someone who knew about the job they were interested in. Only a small number of students thought they might choose a teacher to talk to.

Students were next given a list of information sources and asked to indicate how much information they had already obtained from these sources. The following table shows the percentage of students responding in each category.

Table 5 : Sources of information already used (% all students)

Source \ Amount of info.	A lot	Some	Not much/ nothing
Mother	45	43	12
Father	58	20	22
Sibling	17	39	44
Friend	11	46	43
Teacher	27	53	20
Careers teacher	24	11	65
Other adult	24	38	38
Books/pamphlets, etc.	16	54	30
TV	12	46	42
Radio	4	25	71
Movies/videos	5	26	69

The table shows that students find out most information about jobs from their parents, particularly their fathers. There were significant differences due to sex, where boys were more likely to have obtained a lot of information from their fathers, whereas more girls said they had only found out some things from their fathers. Girls, however, were not more likely than boys to have found out a lot of information from their mothers, but more girls than boys indicated that they had found out some things from their mothers. Tables 6 and 7 summarize these results.

Table 6 : Sex differences in information obtained from mothers

Amount of Information	% Males	% Females	% All Students
A lot	50	42	45
Some	35	51	43
Nothing	15	7	12

Table 7 : Sex differences in information obtained from fathers

Amount of Information	% Males	% Females	% All Students
A lot	75	42	58
Some	13	27	20
Nothing	12	31	22

The greatest source of information after parents were teachers, though students more often said that they found out some things from their teachers, rather than a lot.

The sources of least information were radio, movies/videos and careers teachers, though of those who had obtained information from careers teachers, most had obtained a lot. This lack of information derived from careers teachers can probably be attributed to the fact that most schools don't conduct formal careers lessons until late in Year 9 or Year 10, so that at the time of the interviews, most Year 9 students had as yet had little contact with the careers teacher.

Students were questioned in greater detail about those particular sources which had been claimed to have provided a lot of information for that individual student. The types of information that the students obtained from various sources are shown in the table below.

Table 8 : Percentage of students indicating type of information obtained from each source

(n = number of students responding in category shown, figures shown are % of n who obtained that type of information)

Type of information obtained \ Source	Mother n=63	Father n=61	Sibling n=24	Friend n=14	Teacher n=35	Careers Teacher n=27	Other Adult n=28	Books/ Pamphlets n=22	TV n=18
General description of various jobs	13	21	4	29	11	37	7	41	50
Particular info about jobs e.g. conditions	30	23	33	7	-	19	29	50	33
Qualifications/ courses	10	11	8	14	29	22	7	14	6
Job seeking/ interview skills	6	3	13	21	34	44	4	14	6
Personal work experiences	38	21	33	29	14	4	32	-	-
Work ethic value statements	25	21	17	-	14	4	32	-	11
Present preparation/study skills	14	15	4	-	14	11	11	-	-
Discussion of plans	11	8	4	7	11	19	4	-	-
What it's like to work/what to expect	29	25	29	29	17	11	32	5	17
Financial matters	5	5	17	7	9	4	7	5	-
People/ personal skills	10	7	8	7	11	7	7	5	6
Job skills/ technical skills	5	8	8	7	9	-	11	5	-
Job market/ unemployment	5	5	4	7	6	4	-	-	33

The type of information that students receive most from their parents is about what its like to work, how to act in a job, and about their own personal experiences of working. Work ethic values seem to be derived mainly from parents, and they are also a frequent source of information about particular jobs. To a lesser extent, parents play a role in encouraging students to prepare for their careers by studying hard now, and by providing general descriptions of various jobs. Although other adults are a less frequently used source of information, they tend to provide similar types of information as parents.

Information derived from the school (teachers and careers teachers) consists primarily of details of qualifications and courses of study relevant for particular jobs, and help in job-seeking skills and interview skills. Careers teachers are seen to be useful sources of general information and descriptions of various jobs.

Siblings and peers, while appearing to play a relatively minor role in the provision of career information, are generally used as sources of information about particular jobs (mostly their own), in giving descriptions of various jobs, and in discussions of what it's like to have a job and of their own personal experiences.

Books, pamphlets and television mainly fulfil the purpose of providing students with both general and particular information about various jobs. The most frequent source of information about the job market and unemployment was the television.

Relevance of School to Work

A few questions were designed to examine the students' perception of how relevant school was to their future work, and specifically which areas

would be useful, and which areas were lacking. Table 9 shows subjects learnt at school that students thought would be most useful in helping them obtain a job.

Table 9 : Percentage of students who say subject is useful in getting a job

Subject	Percentage students
Maths	68
English	54
Science	31
Technical subjects e.g. woodwork, metalwork, textile and design, etc.	24
Commerce	14
Social Sciences	13
Arts (inc. music, drama, etc.)	10
PE/Sport	5
All Subjects	11
No Subjects	2

The students were also asked to indicate what other things they learn at school, apart from school subjects, which might help them in getting a job. The table below summarizes these responses.

Table 10 : Other skills/knowledge learnt at school which are helpful in getting a job

Skill/Knowledge	Percentage students
People/social skills	44
Personal/organization/living skills	25
Job seeking/Interview skills	11
Specific job skills/technical skills	8
Careers information/"work experience"	9
Experience*	4
Nothing	20

* Experience includes informal work experience which the student obtains through the school e.g. helping in the canteen, as opposed to "work experience" which is an organised placement at a job for a period of time scheduled into the school year.

More girls than boys and more high-achieving than middle and low achieving students recognized that social skills were something they acquired at school. Low-achieving students were more likely than other students to believe that they learnt nothing useful to getting a job, apart from school subjects.

Low-achieving students were also more likely than the rest to say that they learnt everything they needed to know about jobs at school. In all, 17% of the students believed this, while just over four-fifths of the students thought that they did not learn everything they needed to know at school.

The table below summarizes the responses to the question: "What things don't you learn at school that you need to know to get a job?"

Table 11 : Things not learned at school

Skills/Knowledge	Percentage students
Skills/Knowledge	Percentage students
Specific job skills/technical skills	32
Job seeking/interview skills	18
Careers information	16
Personal/organizational/living skills	10
Experience	9
People/social skills	6
Nothing	17

By far the most common response to this question was "specific job skills and technical skills appropriate to their chosen field of work". Students were also concerned with receiving more career education and skills related to job-seeking, however it is possible that the numbers of students expressing present dissatisfaction in this area might have their needs met in careers lessons which would, for most students, be commencing soon after the time the interviews were conducted.

CONCLUSION

It is clear from the results that this sample of Year 9 Sydney high school students are highly concerned with their future in regards to career decisions and planning. Nearly all the students interviewed had made some sort of decision about the direction in which they were heading in terms of a career and had done at least some thinking about most of the issues discussed.

As would be expected, those students who were planning to leave school in the near future had made more definite decisions about possible work options than other students. However, this did not necessarily indicate that they had engaged in more searching for career information, or had done a greater amount of planning. In fact, while there was not much difference between high and low achieving boys, low achieving girls had actually considered fewer jobs and had obtained less information about careers than high achieving girls.

With regard to the processes students use in choosing a career path, the data shows that more students tend to move towards jobs on the basis of circumstance, than by a matching-selection process. The majority of students indicated that they had selected a job because they knew someone who did or had done the job, because someone else had suggested it to them, or because they had seen or had some experience of the job or the workplace. A large number of students were moving towards a certain career because it was the same job that their father, brother, sister, other relative or close friend was occupied in.

Only 40% had chosen the job because it was appropriate to their skills or interest, and even amongst these students, a large number had not considered a range of jobs and used a matching process, but rather their

interests had automatically implied a certain career. Responses such as "I really enjoy art at school, so I want to do something like that", or "I like doing people's hair and everyone says I'm good at it, so I'm going to be a hairdresser," were quite common. In fact, only one in five students had considered more than two other jobs besides the one they had chosen, and only 16% of those students who were sure about their job choice (10% of the total sample) said that they were sure because they had made a comparison of the various options. Of those students who were unsure of their career choice, only 12% (4% of the total sample) saw the need to consider other jobs, in order to make a decision about which job to pursue.

So it seems, then, that most of these students are not actively seeking to find out about an array of jobs from which they can make a rational choice of an appropriate career, but rather they allow past and present life experiences to determine for them the direction in which they should move.

The results of this study confirm the findings of past research that the family plays a far greater part in the career development of young people than does the school, at least in the eyes of the young people themselves. As previously discussed, the family, especially the parents, have a strong influence in determining the careers chosen by teenagers, specifically by introducing to, and modelling for, the student those careers in which they are engaged. However, the family also has a very major role in providing career-related information for the student. Parents are not only the greatest source of information, but they provide a large range of information including general descriptions of various jobs, and particular information about specific jobs, as well as relating personal experiences and views about their own jobs and what it's like to work. Parents are also key figures in imparting values, especially work

ethic values, and the value of "studying hard now to prepare for the future."

In spite of the emphasis given to the family, the students do acknowledge that the school has to some degree now, as well as potentially, a significant role in career development. Careers teachers are certainly seen as a likely source of information in the future, and even though they are one of the least used sources at this point in Year 9, they seem to have provided the greatest amount of information relative to all the sources, for those small number of students who have had contact with them. Other teachers had also been of some use in providing the type of information or skills that are not readily obtainable from other sources, such as information about qualifications and courses, and assistance in developing job-seeking skills.

Most students acknowledged that school was relevant to the world of work in providing them with academic skills, particularly in Mathematics and English, as well as social skills. However, a large proportion of students would prefer to have access to more career education, and also see a lack of opportunity to develop technical and specifically job-oriented skills, and feel the need for more specialized programs of study relevant to their chosen career.

With regard to the background variables considered in this study, it would appear that social disadvantage has relatively little impact on the career development of students. The only significantly different results due to social disadvantage were as follows:

. More Mt. Druitt students intended to leave school before Year 12 than students from the contrast schools.

. Mt. Druitt students were more likely to choose trades and less likely to choose professional careers than students from contrast school 1, but not contrast school 2.

. Mt. Druitt students were more certain of their career choices than their counterparts from the contrast schools.

. Mt. Druitt students had considered less jobs than the students from contrast school 1, but more than those from contrast school 2.

It is likely, however, that some of these results are not merely due to social disadvantage, but are also influenced by achievement level, since in absolute terms the Mt. Druitt students displayed lower overall composite achievement scores than the students from the contrast schools. Specifically, results relating to intended year of leaving and certainty of job choice, have probably been influenced in this way, as a similar trend was shown in the contrast between high and low achievers on these items.

The fact that the students from contrast school 2 responded similarly to the Mt. Druitt students on the questions about job choice and number of jobs considered, would indicate that this result is again not entirely due to social disadvantage. It is likely that the students are responding to the greater distance from the city and the limited job opportunities experienced as a consequence, in their answers to these questions.

In contrast, gender and achievement level do seem to have an impact on career development. Low achieving students are more likely to leave before completing Year 12, are more likely to choose lower status jobs, are more certain of their career choices, and are less likely to see school as relevant in providing them with work related skills and information, apart from a very basic academically oriented education.

Girls were more likely than boys to have chosen professional careers at this stage, and to have selected their job on the basis of a rational skill-matching process. Girls generally preferred to discuss career issues with their mothers and had found out more information from them than other sources, while boys preferred to talk to their fathers and had correspondingly received more information from them. Girls were more likely to consider seeking out the careers teacher as a source of information, and more likely to acknowledge the value of school in providing them with social skills relevant to the world of work.

Low achieving females were especially at risk of considering fewer jobs and seeking out less information than other students.

Implications for Research, Policy and Practice

The results of this study suggest various ways to assist adolescents in their planning and decision-making about work.

1. Since most students tend to settle on a job because some contact or circumstance orients them towards that job, it would seem appropriate, if one is seeking to improve the career options of young people, to broaden their range of experience with various careers. However, further research is needed to determine whether increased experience of various careers does in fact have an impact on the eventual career choices made by adolescents. If it is found to have no impact, then resources in career education might be more effectively spent, not on helping teenagers to choose a career, but rather providing them with skills in how to pursue their chosen career successfully, and with helping them to cope with the transition from school to work.

2. There is a definite need in career education programs to recognize the large influence that parents have in the career development of young people. In order to maximize the effectiveness of this resource, it would seem worthwhile to involve parents in a collaborative way in the career education process, as well as educating them towards improved understanding of career options and planning for their children.

3. The needs of low-achieving girls should be given special consideration, since it seems that not only are they a high-risk group in terms of possible unemployment, but they also appear to be ill-equipped with skills and information which would assist them to find and keep a job.

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APPENDIX

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

WORK BELIEFS INTERVIEW 1967

Name: _____

School: _____

1.1 Do you want to get a job when you leave school, or after you finish studying? What sort of job?

_____

1.2 Why do you intend to/want to work?

_____

_____

_____

1.3 Is this the same reason that most other people work? (If no, why do others work?)

_____

_____

1.4 Do you think everybody should work? Why/why not?

_____

_____

_____

If no to first question:

1.5 Why not?

_____

_____

1.6 Why do you think other people choose to work?

_____

_____

_____

You said you'd like to work as/in .....

2.1 How did you get the idea to do this job?

2.2 What things have you found out about this job since then?

2.3 How did you find out these things?

2.4 Do you know what you have to do to get this sort of job?
What qualifications and skills do you need?

2.5 What would you like about this job? What made you decide on this job?

2.6 Is there anything you'd dislike about it?

2.7 How sure are you that this is the sort of job you want?

2.8 If yes: What makes you sure?

_____

_____

_____

2.9 If no: What things would you need to know or consider before you could be sure?

_____

_____

_____

2.10 How many jobs have you considered? What are they?

_____

_____

_____

3.1 What do you think your chances are of getting your preferred job when you leave school? (or getting a job you'd like)

Probe: Will you be able to choose the job you'd most like, or will you have to take whatever you can get?

_____

_____

3.2 What things would make it easy for you?

_____

_____

3.3 What things might make it difficult for you?

_____

_____

4.1 What things that you learn at school will help you to get a job when you leave school?

4.2 Are there things other than academic skills that would help you to get a job and to do the job?
What other things do you need to know to get a job?

4.3 Do you learn everything that you need to know about jobs at school?

4.4 What things don't you learn at school?

5.1 If all your efforts to get a job failed, and you were unemployed, what would be your main feeling or thought?

_____

_____

_____

5.2 What would other people feel and think about you? Who are you thinking of when you answer?

_____

_____

_____

5.3 What would you feel like doing?

_____

_____

_____

5.4 Do you know somebody who is/has been unemployed?

_____

5.5 What feelings or thoughts did they have about being unemployed?

_____

_____

_____

5.6 What did/do other people think of them? Who thinks that?

_____

_____

_____

5.7 What did/do you think of them?

_____

_____

_____

6.1 Assuming you were eligible for the dole, and you had the choice of getting the dole or getting a job you did not like very much, which would you choose?

6.2 What would be better about the dole/the job?

6.3 (If chose job: What if the job paid less than the dole? Why?)

6.4 What if you were offered a job you did like, but it paid less than the dole? Which would you choose and why?

7.1 If you actually didn't need to work for the money because you already had enough money (e.g. you won the lottery), would you still work? Why/why not?

7.2 If no, what would you do instead of working?

8.1 Do you know how much the dole is for 18 years olds?

8.2 Do you think this (or the dole) is too much, not enough, or just the right amount?

8.3 Is it enough to live on for an 18 year old?

Probe: What about for people who don't live with their family and have to support themselves?

8.4 Would it restrict your lifestyle very much if you were living on the dole. What things might you not be able to do?

8.5 Why do you think people usually go on the dole?

8.6 How will cutting out the dole for under 18 year olds affect you personally.
Probe: Will you stay at school longer?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. If you wanted to talk about jobs, your plans for the future, and what it is like to be in the workforce, which one person would you be most likely to choose to talk to?

_____

_____

10. How much have you found out about jobs, and what it is like to work from the following sources?

	A lot	Some	Nothing/ not much
Mother			
Father			
Brother/sister/cousin (who?)			
Friend/s			
Teacher/s			
Careers Adviser			
Another adult friend/relative (who?)			
Other person (who?)			
Books/magazines/pamphlets			
TV (which program)			
Radio (which program)			
Movies or videos (which ones)			
Other ways?			

11. You mentioned that you found out a lot from .....
What sorts of things have you found out from them?

a) _____

_____

b) _____

_____

d) _____

_____

d) _____

_____

_____

12. Which of the following jobs would you possibly consider and which do you feel you would not ever consider doing at all?

    If there are any jobs you haven't heard of, or don't know about, I have a list of definitions, but only ask if you really have no idea.

	Might consider	Don't know	Would never consider
High School Teacher			
Motor Mechanic			
Bus Driver			
Shorthand Typist			
Journalist			
Miner			
Social Worker			
Dentist			
Hairdresser			
Police Force			
Computer Programmer			
Primary School Teacher			
Bank Teller			
Nursing Aide			
Law Court Judge			
Truck Driver			
Filing Clerk			
Gardener			

13. Which of these jobs do you think are equally appropriate for males and females, which are more appropriate for females and which for males? Only say "can't decide" if you really have no idea at all.

	More appropriate for females	Equally appropriate for both	More appropriate for males	Can't decide
High School Teacher				
Motor Mechanic				
Bus Driver				
Shorthand Typist				
Journalist				
Miner				
Social Worker				
Dentist				
Hairdresser				
Police Force				
Computer Programmer				
Primary School Teacher				
Bank Teller				
Nursing Aide				
Law Court Judge				
Truck Driver				
Filing Clerk				
Gardener				

14. Select five items randomly from the Student's WAPS answer sheet and readminister those items. Discuss the item and answer to ascertain degree of understanding.

WAPS Item Number	Meaning Understood

High School Teacher:

A person who teaches in a high school.

Motor Mechanic:

A person who fixes car engines.

Bus Driver:

A person who drives a bus.

Shorthand Typist:

A person who takes notes in shorthand and types them up.

Journalist:

A person who writes news stories for newspapers, magazines, and for news and current affairs programs on television and radio.

Miner:

A person who digs in mines.

Social Workers:

A person who helps people who have problems.

Dentist:

A person who looks after people's teeth.

Hairdresser:

A person who cuts and styles people's hair.

Police Force:

A person who protects the public and makes sure laws are obeyed.

Computer Programmer:

A person who tells a computer how to do something e.g. makes up computer games.

Primary School Teacher:

A person who teaches in a primary school

Bank Teller:

A person who works at the counter in a bank and looks after withdrawals and deposits.

Nursing Aide:

A person who helps a nurse, e.g. makes beds, washes patients.

Law Court Judge:

A person who runs a trial in a court and gives out sentences.

Truck Driver:

A person who drives a truck.

Filing Clerk:

A person who puts away and gets out letters, documents, and other information in an office.

Gardener:

A person who looks after trees, flowers and lawns in gardens and grounds.